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NEWS RELEASE

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FLORIDA ENERGY COMMISSION EXPLORES IDEAS, MAKES PLANS FOR FLORIDA'S ENERGY FUTURE

Today, the Florida Energy Commission held its second meeting in Orlando at the Hyatt Airport Hotel at the Orlando Florida International Airport. The Commission and its advisory groups will meet several times from now until this fall, when it will enter the final stages of compiling all information into a report due to the Legislature on Dec. 31. Using the guiding principles of affordability, reliability, diversity and efficiency, the Commission's report will recommend to the Legislature an energy policy for the state.

"To be energy efficient is environmentally sensitive and green not only where the environment is concerned, but also in terms of money," said Sen. Lee Constantine, R-Altamonte Springs, the only legislator appointed to the Commission. "What could be a more patriotic act than relieving Florida of the burden of having to rely on foreign countries that hates us for energy?"

During the meeting, three of the Commission's four advisory groups – Renewables, Climate Change, Generation and Transmission – reported and discussed the issues their advisory groups currently are addressing, and methods being used to reach a consensus on their reports to the full Commission.

Dr. Todd Sack, Climate Change Advisory Group chairman, gave an overview of the group's progress between this Commission meeting and the last, focusing on the public's conveyed sense of urgency to speed up the process of addressing climate change and other energy issues.

Blake Casper, Advisory Group on Renewables chairman, focused on the group's desire to form a definition of "renewable" that includes federal and state regulatory implications. It also has examined the growing popularity of renewable energy sources, citing the instances of ethanol and biodiesel, both of which were viewed by the industry as increasingly viable in response to rising oil prices.

Sam Bell, Generation and Transmission Advisory Group chairman, outlined the group's "horizon approach" to determining what its goals should be, and how it will mitigate any barriers to the goal. The group is using the Delphi method, which uses strategic questions to a panel of experts to reach consensus. It is used to predict environmental outcomes, and also to make predictions in some financial contexts.

The Commission discussed the advisory groups' findings in relation to its charge to draft recommendations for energy policy legislation, and the time frame in which it must do so. It will continue to monitor the progress of all advisory groups, and evaluate information presented at today's meeting, such as future energy needs and their implications on Florida's economy and current bioenergy research. The next full Commission meeting tentatively was scheduled for May 11, and most likely will be held in Tampa. Further information on that meeting will be released in coming weeks.

Overall, the Commission responded with an intent to accommodate the public's wish to see the process of addressing Florida's energy needs move at an increased pace.

"The people of Florida don't want us to plan a process for developing a plan," said Commission Chairman Tommy Boroughs. "They want us to develop a plan and get the wheels in motion. To the best of our ability, we will apply that where it is practical and in the best interest of public health and the environment."

Since 2000, Sen. Constantine has represented Florida district 22, which covers parts of Orange and Seminole counties. He authored the 2006 Senate Bill 888, also known as Florida's Energy Act, which created the Florida Energy Commission.

Since his first appointment, Sen. Constantine has been recognized as a leader for his commitment to preserving the quality of life for all Floridians, especially in the areas of education, environmental growth management and economic development.

Throughout his legislative career, Sen. Constantine has sponsored numerous significant energy- and environment-related bills including the Florida Forever Program (1999), Everglades Restoration (2000), The Florida Unified Building Code (2000), Pre-K Education (2003), The Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act (2004), and the Florida Telecommunication Act (2005). During the 2006 legislative session, he sponsored a bill that helped establish the medical school at the University of Central Florida.

“The future of Florida motivates me to be committed to improving our energy situation,” Sen. Constantine said. “The Commission’s first report will give a true vision of what I and all involved envision for Florida’s future as it relates to the state’s energy needs.”

The Florida Energy Commission is a nine-member panel jointly appointed by the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives. It is charged with recommending to the Florida Legislature the best ways to secure Florida’s energy future using the guiding principles of reliability, efficiency, affordability and diversity.

The Commission’s immediate focus is on renewable energy sources, climate change, and conservation. But these aspects only comprise a few steps of our ultimate plan which will include generation and transmission to address Florida’s long-term energy needs and goals.

By Dec. 31, the FEC will develop a report that will document its progress, and make the first of an ongoing series of recommendations designed to help guide the Florida Legislature in choosing best practices and options for Florida’s energy future.

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